

Spirit of Bermuda

Concerning the events Tuesday 19 January 2016

There have been a number of enquiries and comments resulting from news items covering what occurred to Spirit of Bermuda last Tuesday. Bermuda Sloop Foundation, which has been safely providing expeditionary sail training for Bermuda's students for ten years, welcomes this opportunity to allay any fears the public may have about the safety of students on board Spirit of Bermuda.

We would like to clarify some of the issues raised:

1. **Why were we out there in that weather?**

The forecast winds for our sail to St. George's were for 20-30 knots, which is absolutely great sailing wind for the Spirit. She has sailed safely through up to 40 knots in local waters and on overseas voyages with school students on board every year since 2006. Spirit is a world class ship and has sailed in winds of 70 knots without incident. The ship has been built to the highest standards and shipboard practices emphasise safety first at all time.

2. **Why take school students out in 20-30 knots?**

Expeditionary learning through sail training is character building, taking students out of their comfort zones whilst keeping them safe, imparting skills to deal with unexpected situations in life. Taking students sailing during strong winds is normal at this time of year and not challenging for Spirit. The sail to St. George's was a simple downwind run and not a major task i.e. it never "put to sea". Great care is always taken regarding the students' safety during any such activity. Spirit follows a well-developed and approved Ship Management System.

3. **Sails and Engine**

Two of the five sails frequently used on Spirit were up. One became damaged, was quickly taken down and another hoisted. Spirit of Bermuda was at all times under sail and in control. Due to the combination of wind direction and the engine problem, Spirit was unable to make port during daylight under sail alone, and the decision to request a tow was made.

4. **Injured crew member**

A member of our full time crew was injured during a sailing manoeuvre and received some bruising and minor injuries to his fingertips. He was treated as well as we could on board, then taken to the hospital as soon as Spirit was berthed. The crew member was released the same night, to recuperate at home. He is now almost fully recovered and none of his injuries were serious.

5. **Tow**

Spirit of Bermuda made the call to get assistance into Dockyard in good time, allowing all involved the best conditions to secure the tow. During the tow, Spirit's professional crew were on deck, the students were safe and sound below, tucked up and warm, supervised by other crew members and teachers from the school. The tow to the south basin by the Faithful, and transfer to Dragon for push tow to the berth, were well-managed operations by all concerned, demonstrating the back up available to Bermuda mariners if the unexpected occurs.

6. **Safety and Overall Assessment**

Safety always comes first. Bermuda Sloop Foundation's professional crew had everything under control, made the right choices and took the sensible approach to seek Marine and Ports assistance due to unfavourable wind direction and an engine problem (which has been analysed and is currently being resolved).

The Bermuda Sloop Foundation is very grateful for all the support we received and continue to receive from Marine and Ports and the people of Bermuda. Our mission to "Change Lives One Voyage at a Time, Over Time" continues!